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## The Issue:

Korean Air Lines Flight 007 was shot down over Sakhalin Island in the Soviet Union last September 1. An article published in the current issue of *Defence Attache*, a respected British magazine, suggests the airliner could have been part of a complex intelligence-gathering mission, designed to test Soviet radar defenses.

The byline is a pseudonym; the magazine said the author "for professional reasons must remain anonymous," but "is well-known to the editor."

The article argued that a military plane over Soviet territory was likely to be shot down quickly — too quickly to gather the information needed — while a "manifestly civilian" aircraft would not trigger the military defenses the operation could have been designed to monitor. Consequently, it argued, an intelligence mission would call for "an aircraft of initially apparently military character, which would turn out later to be apparently civilian." Thus, the article says, the KAL flight, before entering Soviet airspace, was initially accompanied by a similar-appearing U. S. military plane, an RC-135.

An American satellite, apparently designed for electronic intelligence-gathering, and a space shuttle flight were in position to monitor the Soviet response, the article says. This diagram shows the relative positions of the Korean airliner, the American RC-135, the "Ferret" satellite and the shuttle, as explained in the article.

The article does not conclude the airliner was on a spy mission; it lays out possible evidence for such a mission and calls for further investigation. The magazine itself, in an introduction, said it "does not necessarily agree with all the author's views," but that "many questions concerned with the Sakhalin incident remain unanswered; many now posed by the article have never been asked before."

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger denounced the article, which he said had "picked up lock, stock and barrel the total set of lies the Soviet Union published" after the incident.

Here, *The Sun* reprints the *Defence Attache* article, accompanied by an article by Charles Corddry, *The Sun's* Pentagon correspondent, in which the assumptions of the *Defence Attache* article are challenged.

# The Sakhalin incident

## Could Korean Air Lines Flight 007 have been part of an elaborate intelligence-gathering operation?

### Badger:

U. S. Navy ship, positioned off coast; according to Soviet version of the incident, part of the intelligence-gathering apparatus.

### Space shuttle:

Only nighttime launch in shuttle history, roughly 36 hours before Sakhalin incident, put shuttle 1,400 to 2,000 miles south of Sakhalin at time of incident — "a discrete distance, but amply close to involve the shuttle in its . . . role in the conducting of the extended intelligence operation."

### 'Ferret':

U. S. satellite, believed to be for electronic intelligence-gathering, made one pass over the area well before KAL 007 entered Soviet airspace, possibly for "recording Soviet radar and electronic emissions at the routine military level," and one pass timed exactly with each time the airliner passed over Soviet territory.

### RC-135:

U.S. military plane with similar profile to KAL's 747, flew close to Flight 007 a half-hour before 007 entered Soviet airspace — possibly "a dummy-selling tactic, creating the possibility that a military aircraft was flying in to cross the borders of the Soviet Union."

### KAL Flight 007:

Some 300 miles off course, it passed over Soviet airspace twice and was shot down by Soviet fighters over southern Sakhalin — killing the 269 persons on board and touching off an international incident.

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